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SOURCE

1. The Brzeszcze-Jawiszowice coal mine is located ten kilometers southwest of Oswiecim (N 50-02, E 19-14). The main administration buildings are located at the older part, Brzeszcze. The newer and modernized Jawiszowice mine, located three kilometers away, is an independent mine, even though both mines are connected underground. Brzeszcze employs about 800 persons civilians and soldiers. Jawiszowice employs about 800 civilians and about 800 prisoners.
2. The coal layers are between 170 and 420 meters below the surface. The individual shafts are 170, 260, 360, and 430 meters deep. The coal layer 170 meters deep is already exhausted. Exploitation is taking place at the 260 and 360 meter shafts, while the coal layer 430 meters deep is being prepared for exploitation. The layers' thickness varies between .8 and 2.5 meters. The layer 400 meters deep is about 4 meters thick.
3. The mine yields bituminous coal. It is termed a gas mine because of the constant presence of methane gas. The gas, which becomes unhealthy when its presence is in excess of one percent of the air, is measured by check lamps. Sections where gas is present are blocked off. Suction compressors are used to remove the gas. Sections already exploited are blocked off with cement. If the air circulation in a section which is being worked is insufficient, it is increased by either additional ventilators or the building of wooden barriers across the tunnels, which build up a strong draft. The draft is quite considerable in the main tunnels. Fresh air is sucked in and pumped throughout the mine.
4. The presence of methane increases the risk of explosion also. It is forbidden to smoke or even to take cigarettes or matches along. Offenders are severely punished. Because of the danger of explosion, only lamps run by battery are used. These weigh about 5 kilograms each. The danger of explosion is combatted by the use of powdered stone, which is supposed to choke fires. The workers engaged in this activity receive an additional half liter of milk daily. Wooden framework is erected, on which loose planks are laid, one on top of the other, and strewn with powdered stone. When an explosion occurs, these planks are knocked to the ground. The resultant clouds of dust choke the fire. There had been no fire in either mine lately.

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5. The plant had been thoroughly modernized by the Germans during the early part of World War II. The electric power installation was delivered by Siemens-Berlin and is used principally for the conveyor belts which bring the coal from the mine walls to the mine railway. The coal is loaded in lorries, which are moved by big battery cars to the elevator. The battery cars can pull about 250 empty or 100 loaded lorries. The conveyor belt motors move up to 150 meters of loaded conveyor belt and 150 meters (sic) of empty conveyor belt. Another motor has to be obtained for longer belts.
6. One work section works on three coal walls, the upper, middle, and lower walls. Iron troughs (kinnen) are used to transport the coal. These are three meters long and run on pulleys and bridges. They are driven by compressed air motors. The troughs are attached and form one long train, which moves in a jerky motion. One motor moves about 80 to 120 meters of troughs. Electric coal cutting machines with arms 1.65 meters long are used to drill 10-centimeter-wide holes for blasting. Holes in low walls are drilled from below; in high walls they are drilled in the middle. The holes stand one meter apart. After the coal is blasted, it is transported away.
7. As many workers as are necessary to clear away the coal in one day are put on a wall that has been blasted. The work goes on continuously. The first and second shifts get the coal out and the third advances the tunnels. Wooden and iron poles and iron boxes are used to support the ceilings. They are set only three meters apart.
8. The critical situation in the Polish mining industry is explained in that the six-year plan expects a yearly increase in production. This increase is hampered by various difficulties. The equipment which was installed by the Germans has become old and in need of repair. Poland has neither the new equipment nor the necessary spare parts. Standstills occur daily because of failure of the equipment. The following equipment is especially old or in bad shape: electric conveyor motors, compressed air drills, compressed air winders for transporting lorries to the surface, coal cutting machines, ventilators, compressors for compressed air motors.
9. Other reasons for the nonfulfillment are as follows: the inadequate technical skill of the personnel, the continuous employment of the machinery which runs it down, the emphasis on production and the neglect of maintenance and conservation of the mines, the norm system which encourages the workers to do substandard work, undernourishment, and the driving of the workers to work long hours and on holidays.
10. In 1950 there were four six-hour shifts at Jawiszowice. Three eight-hour shifts were substituted for this. As of this date the shifts are eight and one-half hours each, and the foremen are instructed to falsify the time books. The workers are spurred on to produce more by decorations and bonuses. This additional work only causes the miner to exhaust himself. Even the best miners can continue at an extra fast pace for a short time only. There is general dissatisfaction with the regime. The miners are not only disinterested in the administration, but they are more ready to sabotage it.

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11. For these reasons production not only did not increase but actually decreased. Meetings held to determine the reason for the decrease and the methods to overcome it were unfruitful because of the workers' hostility. Prisoners who were forced into the mines could count a month twice if they reached 11 percent of the norm in that month. Although the prisoners as a rule tried to accomplish this, even this had little effect on the rate of production.
12. The daily production at Jawiszowice during the fall of 1952 amounted to about 4,000 metric tons. The daily production at Brzeszcze during the same period amounted to a little less. All the coal was shipped by rail to Russia.
13. Standstills in the mines could be registered almost daily. The principal reasons for this were as follows: The conveying troughs broke down. The screws worked loose very frequently. The motors stopped because either they were old, or they were clogged up. The conveyor belts broke down. The tunnel ceilings caved in. Trucks were in short supply. The compressed air was insufficient. There were electric disturbances in the conveyor motors. The ventilation system did not always function properly. The coal cutting machines broke down quite frequently.
14. For all these reasons, the situation grows worse from year to year. No improvements are being made. The only method being employed to raise production is the forcing of more people into the mines.
15. The living and working conditions of the miners become increasingly worse also. In 1950 the personnel in Jawiszowice worked four six-hour shifts. The time was counted from the time a miner entered till the time he left the shaft. Shortly thereafter three eight-hour shifts were introduced. The pressure was put on the miners to extend their time voluntarily. The length of a shift was extended one-half hour with the promise that Sundays would not be worked. Then "plan" Sundays and "beyond plan" Sundays were introduced. Those miners who did not work on these Sundays were discriminated against. The miners were enticed to work extra hours by a progressively rising pay scale. They were forced also to voluntarily honor public holiday by working extra shifts, or else it was publicly announced that they had asked to work an extra shift in order to earn some extra money.
16. Even though eight and one-half hours were counted for pay purposes, the actual working day was longer. Because there were only two elevators, it took a long time for the men to get out of the mines. The foremen did not keep the correct time or else insisted that the men work the eight and one-half hours at coal mining and not count the transportation time. The actual time often amounted to ten hours.
17. In contrast to the increase in demands for work, the food situation became correspondingly worse. Supplies were of poorer quality and did not cover the demand. Since the currency reform of 1950, prices have continued to rise. In 1953 they are 200 percent above those of 1950. Basic foods such as bread, meat, and sugar could be obtained at low prices before the rationing system was dropped on 1 January 1952. Since then prices have skyrocketed; for instance, sugar which had cost five zlotys a kilogram jumped to fifteen.
18. Before 1950 prisoners working in the mines could receive packages up to five kilograms in weight twice a month. Prisoners held for questioning could receive one every week. Prisoners in the work camps were governed by no such restrictions. This was since stopped, the reason being given that the Polish state was wealthy enough to feed its own prisoners.

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19. The canteens were well stocked with goods up until the middle of 1951, during which time a prisoner could spend 25 percent of his pay in the canteen. Since then the variety of goods has decreased. Where formerly butter, fat, and sausages were obtainable, now marmalade only was to be had. Candy which formerly sold at 10 zlotys went up to 20 to 30 zlotys.
20. The official menu served at the mine grew steadily worse. There was less variety and shorter rations. Jawiszowice was better off, however, since soup and dry bread was usual fare in prisons. The relatively better food that prevailed in this mine was the main reason for the extraordinary work done by the mine. The total working day amounted to about 13 hours. In addition there was the work done in camp, such as kitchen duties and keeping the living areas clean.

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